



# MANAGING GROWTH

J. David Donahue, a 1981 graduate of Eastern Kentucky University, is at the peak of his career, overseeing one of the nation's large penal systems. And, he says emphatically, the secret to that success began at ECU.

As Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction, appointed January 2005 by Governor Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., Donahue runs a department of about 9,000 employees in 32 institutions housing more than 24,000 inmates.

Donahue, 47, a native of Bardstown, Kentucky, received his bachelor's degree in police administration and criminal justice from Eastern Kentucky University and did graduate course work at Spaulding University. He has more than 24 years of experience in corrections, including service with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, local government, and private corrections operations. He says there is no doubt about the value of the experience he received going through the criminal justice program at ECU.

"What was very recognizable from the beginning for me was the personal yet professional focus of the criminal justice academic staff at ECU. When I was in school every faculty member in the Department, without hesitation, had a personal interest in promoting public safety," said Donahue.

"Without the associations that I developed at ECU, there is no question I wouldn't have been able to sustain my career in law enforcement for 26 years."

Donahue said he is now working in his fifth law enforcement jurisdiction, "and in every jurisdiction I've been in, I have met an ECU graduate."

In fact, he says, running the large penal system is "a little like a personal family business. One of our most important assets is the employees. Without them, we can't get our jobs done. We routinely seek out folks who have post-secondary education. Anytime we see someone from Eastern, they are very attractive to us."

"We also see folks (other institutions) modeling their programs after what ECU has done," he added.

Donahue said that as he travels around the country and people recognize that he is from ECU, "there is a significant level of confidence, and it is great to be a part of that."

He began his career as a corrections officer in 1980. Since then Donahue has held several management positions. In addition, he has been assigned to several facilities throughout the country, having served as warden of two institutions.

In the early 1990s Donahue became an auditor for the American Correctional Association (ACA) and routinely assisted governmental jurisdictions with corrections and criminal justice issues. He has continued to maintain professional memberships with national corrections associations and has also served as public safety director for the City of Barbourmeade in Jefferson County, Kentucky.

Nationwide, corrections systems are experiencing an increase in inmate populations of about 3.5 percent. According to the latest U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics, Indiana has felt the effects of roughly a 2 percent increase over the last year. "Not one jurisdiction in the country is unaffected by increases," Donahue stated. "Corrections is a growth industry and it is becoming more complex."

This inmate increase is coming at a time when correctional institutions are becoming leaner because of economic competition occurring in the corrections community.

Two decades ago, Donahue says, correctional institutions did not have much confidence in turning over a facility to private operations. Today that is changing and trained personnel are lured to the private sector by the promise of more money and opportunities.

"I have to maximize all available resources," the Commissioner says. "In Indiana, I have the second largest agency in the government. We have even eclipsed education and health services. We have to look at resources and outcomes. Gov. Daniels, my boss, says that if you are not keeping score, then you are just practicing."

Although Donahue says he is not thinking too far in the future, at some point, he might entertain the thought of returning to academia to teach.

"I've had a lot of experience through hard knocks," he says with a laugh. "It would be just awesome to return to ECU." 